

MEMORANDUM

TO: M. W. Olson
 FROM: A. H. Katz
 DATE: 8-21-67
 MEMO NO. M-5589
 SUBJECT: Further Discussion (anent your Memo LM-82, 8 Aug. 1967, "A Dangerous NVN Ploy")
 COPIES TO: W. B. Graham, A. S. Mengel, F. Sallagar, E. H. Sharkey,
 G. A. Shubert, Dan Ellsberg

This correspondence is getting so damned interesting that we ought to put all of it in a "D;" open it up to a wider audience, and see whether there is enough response to go forward with it (I'm always the optimist).

My ancient memo M-849 dated 1-31-67, "Supposing Interdiction Works?" had about as much successful flight time as a lead balloon fired from Rangoon at noon to Cameroon. This is shorthand for saying most people thought I was mad when I proposed the ideas in that memo.

Your D-15743 "NVN War Room" was very interesting and stimulated a little thought, but no writing.

The NVN government is confronted with a very interesting and novel bombing problem. It is a Bayesian inverse probability problem: Here's what happened; what was the purpose (or targets). I think you have an excellent idea in your memo. If North Vietnam were as Machiavellian, as clever, as ornery as me and thee, the U.S. could be put in a tighter pickle barrel than it now finds itself.

Your last paragraph raises some interesting questions about our allies. It leads me to suggest what you have heard me say many times before, that with respect to the professed U.S. aim of deterring future "similar" engagements we have already lost, independent of the outcome of this particular affair in Southeast Asia. In the first place, who should fear starting something against us? We are putting in our best people, and most of them; our best technology, almost all our dollars--and what do we have? We've got these components stuck and immobilized in Southeast Asia like pepperoni, anchovies, mushrooms and all the rest on Luigi's Special Pizza!

In the second place, it'll be a rare day before we ever dive in quicksand again, and we know it, and so does everyone else.

What these arguments suggest has also been stated before: It's not only whether you win or lose, but how long it takes you to play the game, how much it costs you, and whether you like the name of the game.

AHK:mr

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